

## Annual tournament keeping Caden's memory alive

BY PATTI MARTIN • STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 9, 2008

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Carol and Phil Dutt of Englishtown with their 9-month-old daughter Miya. (STAFF PHOTO: MIKE McLAUGHLIN)

It takes Phil and Carol Dutt only a nanosecond to answer when asked why they're working so hard to make their basketball tournament a success.

"It's Caden's legacy," the Englishtown couple say, referring to their 4-month-old son, Caden Andrew, who passed away in his sleep on Jan. 29, 2006. "It's important to keep his memory alive . . . we want to remember him always and share his story with as many people as possible."

To honor their "little superhero," the Dudts established The Caden Dutt Memorial Fund of The Children's Heart Foundation in the spring of 2006. For the past two years, they have held The Caden Dutt Memorial Basketball Tournament, which has raised nearly \$45,000 for congenital heart research.

The third annual tournament, hosted by The Jersey Shore Athletic Group, Inc., will take place at 9 a.m. Aug. 16 at Toms River High School North, Old Freehold Road. A fundraising luncheon will be held in conjunction with the tournament beginning at noon.

"The tournament is something we want to do, we have to do," Phil Dutt says. "If we didn't do it, it would feel like we're letting Caden down."

It was during what was supposed to be a routine 18-week ultrasound that the Dudts learned that there were problems. In utero, Caden was diagnosed with heterotaxy syndrome (a rare illness that includes malformations of the heart and blood vessels), a hypoplastic left ventricle, total anomalous pulmonary venous return, a double-outlet right ventricle, an unbalanced AV canal and pulmonary stenosis.

"He was only with us for four months and three weeks," Carol Dutt says, "but we wouldn't have traded a minute for anything in the world."

While the tournament raises much-needed research funds, it also provides the Dudts with an opportunity to raise awareness about congenital heart defects.

"It's what Caden would want us to do," Carol Dudt says.

And at this year's event, there will be a new spectator taking in all the action: Miya Cadence Dudt, born Oct. 25, 2007.

"She sees pictures of Caden all over and smiles at them," Carol Dudt says. "And when she's a little older, we'll tell Miya all about her superhero big brother."

Miya, Phil Dudt says, has brought back a joy that had been missing in their lives.

"When you look at her, you see Caden," he says.

"And we know that Caden is looking down and watching over her, watching over us," Carol Dudt adds.